

# Request for Applications

## Wisconsin Project SEARCH Expansion

### Introduction

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services is seeking applications for new partnerships to expand the Project SEARCH model for transition age young adults in Wisconsin. There is no direct funding or cash award associated with this Request for Applications (RFA), however successful applicants will receive pre-paid training and technical assistance which is required for all Project SEARCH initiatives.

This initiative is led by the Division of Long Term Care, which aims to maximize employment for people with disabilities. Project SEARCH is a collaborative effort among the Department of Health Services, Department of Workforce Development and Department of Public Instruction.

### Background

Project SEARCH is an internationally recognized, trademarked model of employment training for young adults with significant disabilities. The Project SEARCH model for transition age high school students, ages 18-21, consists of a one year internship program at a business site. An onsite instructor provides training on employment readiness and independent living skills in a classroom setting. Students participate in worksite internship rotations based on their interests. Rotations teach complex, systematic skills that prepare students for jobs in their chosen business field. Students are given support through job coaching services and worksite accommodations. The ultimate goal of Project SEARCH is independence and competitive employment. Successful implementation of Project SEARCH requires strong collaboration among a partnership representing long term support agencies, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, vocational service providers, school representatives, parents, students and businesses.

Project SEARCH is established at seven Wisconsin businesses: William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital and University of Wisconsin Hospital in Madison, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin in Wauwatosa, Ministry St. Joseph's Hospital in Marshfield, St. Elizabeth Hospital in Appleton, Waukesha Memorial Hospital in Waukesha, and in the Wal-Mart Distribution Center #6025 in Menomonie.

Project SEARCH was developed in 1996 by Nurse J. Erin Riehle, then the Director of the Emergency Department at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center (CCHMC). As the flagship program, CCHMC provides technical assistance for replication and overall leadership to Project SEARCH worldwide. During the first two years of planning and implementation, all sites are required participate in significant training and technical assistance from CCHMC. Technical assistance and audit services must be purchased through a contract with CCHMC, which is the sole source for Project SEARCH assistance worldwide.

Project SEARCH is a trademarked and copyrighted program. All Project SEARCH sites must be licensed through the Project SEARCH program at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. Project SEARCH sites must adhere to model fidelity standards and receive program audits to ensure compliance. The program tracks its success with an international web based database that collects information from all licensed Project SEARCH sites.

These measures assure that the Project SEARCH model will continue to maintain standards of excellence in both implementation and outcomes. However, the cost of technical assistance is often prohibitive to new partnerships interested in establishing a Project SEARCH site.

**Through this initiative, the Department of Health Services will fund the required CCHMC technical assistance and training for successful applicant partnerships during the planning and implementation of the Project SEARCH model.** DHS will arrange for the training and technical assistance services to be provided to successful applicants. Successful applicants will not receive any direct funding or cash award. Successful applicants will not contract directly with CCHMC for training and technical assistance, but will be required to obtain a Project SEARCH license. There is no cost for the license in the first year.

### **Purpose of the Initiative**

The Project SEARCH expansion initiative has been made available to increase competitive employment outcomes for transition age young adults. Successful applicants will receive an award of training and technical assistance services to develop and implement the Project SEARCH model for transition age young adults. Training and technical assistance will be provided for the period of July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015. Partnerships may be eligible for annual continuation of training and technical assistance upon successful completion of the program deliverables, listed below. All training and technical assistance awards are contingent upon the availability of funding at the Department of Health Services. Up to seven awards may be granted through this RFA. Subsequent competitive RFAs may be released in 2015 and 2016 to select additional new Project SEARCH partnerships.

Training and technical assistance services awarded through this RFA must be used to plan the Project SEARCH model for high school transition age students, age 18-21. Partnerships will plan for implementation in the 2015-2016 academic year. This initiative will award training and technical assistance services that are required for all Project SEARCH sites. Successful applicants will not receive a cash award, however, training and technical assistance services are valued at \$30,000 per site. Successful applicant partnerships will be required to arrange funding for all other components of planning, implementing, and operating the Project SEARCH model.

### **Training and Technical Assistance**

Successful applicant partnerships will be required to:

- Send representatives from each partner agency to all required training and technical assistance events for the award period. Many of the technical assistance events will be provided for all recipients at a central location, based on the geographic distribution of the Partnerships. When possible, the central location will be no more than three hours by

car from all Partnership home communities. For these centrally located events, Partnerships will be responsible for funding transportation, lodging, and food for their own participants. Block registrations for lodging will be arranged at the state rate of \$70/night whenever possible.

The remaining training and technical assistance events will be arranged for individual Partnerships and will be located in the home communities. Partnerships will be expected to arrange suitable meeting space for all of their local partners and technical assistance providers to work together.

Partnerships are required to show that they are prepared to fund these expenses related to training and technical assistance in the Financial Commitment section (VII) of this application.

Training and technical assistance plans will be designed to meet the needs of the successful applicant partnerships. Training and technical assistance will likely include the following:

Joint Partnership meetings at a central location for all participants:

- Program overview (2 days)
- Student selection preparation (2 days)
- Host business development (2 days)
- Teaching and Coaching for Success training workshop (2 days)
- Reaching the Goal of 100% Employment training workshop (2 days)

Individual Partnership meetings in a home community location:

- Student selection (1 day)
- Employer education (1 day)
- Internship development (1 day)
- Statewide technical assistance conference calls as needed

- Send at least three representatives of the partnership to the International Project SEARCH Conference in Omaha, NE on July 22-25, 2014.
  - Partnerships must plan to fund expenses related to the conference, including food, travel expenses, and any expenses incurred as part of the conference requirements.
  - Partnerships are required to show that they are prepared to fund conference participation in the financial commitment section of this application. Information about the conference and related expenses are available at:  
<http://projectsearch.us/Events.aspx>
  - If funding is available, some conference expenses may be covered for successful applicants.
- Conduct Partnership Steering Committee meetings at least one time per month in the home community. The Steering Committee must include at least one representative from each required partner agency.

## **Project SEARCH Partnerships**

The successful applicant will establish a Project SEARCH Partnership, including:

- School system representatives
  - School partners may include the home schools, districts and CESAs of the high school students attending Project SEARCH
  - In most cases, the Project SEARCH instructor is employed by one of the school partners. Schools contribute financially by paying program fees for students' participation in Project SEARCH.
  - Multiple school partners may participate in a Project SEARCH site.
  - The individual representative(s) identified must have authority to make financial decisions for the school partner(s).
- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
  - DVR provides comprehensive case management, including the development of the Individual Plan for Employment (IPE).
  - Project SEARCH requires that all interns have an active DVR-approved IPE.
  - DVR funds IPE approved services, including job coaching, and job development as well as several other service options on an individualized basis (e.g. training, equipment, assistive technology).
  - Whenever possible, DVR will assign specific Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to work with each Project SEARCH site.
- Long term support providers
  - In most Wisconsin counties, the long term support providers must include representatives from the local Managed Care Organization(s) and IRIS.
  - In some Wisconsin counties, the long term support providers will include one or more county human services agencies.
  - Long term support providers provide follow along services for eligible students. Project SEARCH requires that 80% of interns be eligible for long term support.
  - In some cases, long term support providers may pay for the participation of interns, up to age 25, who have completed high school and are not eligible for school funding. However, high school students are given priority for participation in Project SEARCH.
- Vocational Services Provider
  - The vocational services provider (VSP) provides job coaches at the Project SEARCH site. The VSP will also provide job development services.
  - The VSP is responsible for employing the job coaches and job developers.
  - Job coaching and development is paid through a contracted funding agreement between the VSP and DVR.
  - The individual representative(s) identified must have authority to make financial decisions for the vocational services provider.

- Host business
  - The host business provides a training classroom, a business liaison and rotational internships for Project SEARCH.
- Representative(s) of families of students with disabilities
  - Family representatives provide networking with the community and valuable insights into the needs of Project SEARCH interns and their families. They also may implement the Project SEARCH Family Involvement Program.

It is not necessary to have the Project SEARCH Partnership formally in place when applying for this award. However, all anticipated and confirmed partners must be identified in this application. It is not required to have identified a host business for this application.

### **Deliverables:**

The following are required deliverables of a Project SEARCH Partnership, to be completed by June 30, 2015. Completion of these deliverables will be guided by the training and technical assistance process.

- National Project SEARCH license (no cost in the first year)
- Planning and implementation workplan and timeline
- Memoranda of understanding among partners
- Multi-year business plan for Project SEARCH implementation
- Braided funding agreements, schedule and procedures
- Operational budget
- Student selection process
- Project SEARCH New Student Application Packet
- Program marketing plan
- List of potential internships and related core skills
- Overview of Project SEARCH curriculum and student schedule
- Materials created to share Project SEARCH story (DVD, powerpoint, flyers, etc.)
- Steering Committee agendas and minutes
- Report of lessons learned during this phase of Project SEARCH planning.

### **Who may apply and what are the qualifications:**

- A) Applicants must designate a lead agency. The lead agency for the application must hold a certificate of good standing with the Secretary of State or have a fiscal agent with such a certificate. Applicants must be willing to provide all necessary program and financial reports. The lead agency must represent one of the required partners in the Project SEARCH model.
- B) Applications will be accepted from any geographic area of the state. Such areas do not have to be limited by any specific political or other existing boundary or designation.

- C) Applicants shall have or demonstrate the capacity to facilitate the planning and implementation of a Project SEARCH program within the geographic area identified in the proposal.

### **Additional Information**

#### **RFA location:**

This request for applications (RFA) and additional information about the Project SEARCH model are available at: <http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/rfp/>

#### **Project SEARCH webcast:**

A “High School Transition the Project SEARCH Way” webcast is available at:

Part 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqYOtigta2w>

Part 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EakNzKFjBpg>

#### **Model Fidelity:**

Project SEARCH has established elements of model fidelity. These are components of the project that must be in place in order to maintain a Project SEARCH license. Successful applicants will be required to adhere to all components of Project SEARCH model fidelity.

More information on model fidelity is available at:

<http://projectsearch.us/OurPROGRAM/ProgramModel.aspx>

#### **Technical Assistance:**

Comprehensive technical assistance will be provided to the successful applicant(s) including access to the Project SEARCH Program Specialists from Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center. Successful applicants will be required to participate in training and technical assistance opportunities.

#### **Disclaimer:**

The grantor reserves the right to reject any and all proposals.

#### **Deadline:**

Applicants must submit one paper copy of the completed proposal and one in electronic format (Word or PDF) on a USB drive. All parts of the proposal must be included in both electronic and paper formats in order to be considered. Proposals must not be stapled or bound in any way; paper clips or similar are acceptable.

#### **Applications must be received at the address below by May 30, 2014.**

Send proposals to:

Department of Health Services Procurement  
Project SEARCH expansion  
Attention: Elizabeth Schweitzer  
1 W. Wilson Street, Room 655  
Madison, Wisconsin 53702

**Questions and answers:**

All questions must be submitted electronically to [dhsprocurement@dhs.wisconsin.gov](mailto:dhsprocurement@dhs.wisconsin.gov) by April 25, 2014. A question and answer document containing all questions submitted will be posted at <http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/rfp/> by April 30, 2014.

If you have technical difficulties submitting questions electronically, please contact Elizabeth Schweitzer, DHS Procurement, at 608-267-5156.

**Notification:**

Notification of decision will be made by June 25, 2014, with program start around July 1, 2014.

**Proposal Format and Requirements**

The main body of the proposal must not exceed 15 double-spaced typewritten pages in 12-point Times New Roman font. Letters of Support and Financial Commitment spreadsheet will not count toward this 15 page limit or the appendices. Appendices may accompany the body of the proposal but must not exceed an additional 10 pages. Appendices will not be scored. Applications not following the required format will not be considered for funding.

Applicants must respond to each of the following numbered sections and identify each section by title given in this request for proposals.

**Section I. Lead Agency Contact Information (5 points)**

Complete contact information of the applicant (i.e. name of agency, type of agency, project lead(s), address(es), phone numbers, fax, e-mail, etc.).

**Section II. Partnership (10 Points)**

Identify potential partners in the Project SEARCH model, including contact information for confirmed partners. **Applicants are not expected to have identified a host business.**

Which of the following partners required by Project SEARCH do you have in place?

School District(s) or CESA(s): Y / N

Name and Title of Representative:

Contact information (address, phone, email):

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services: Y / N

Name and Title of Representative:

Contact information (address, phone, email):

Long Term Support Agency:  
Managed Care Organization: Y/N  
IRIS: Y/N  
County Human Services: Y/N  
Name of Agency:  
Name and Title of Representative:  
Contact information (address, phone, email):

Vocational Services Provider: Y / N  
Name of Agency:  
Name/Title of Representative:  
Contact information (address, phone, email):

Family Representative: Y/N  
Name/Title of Representative:  
Contact information (address, phone, email):

Host Business: Y / N  
Name:  
Name/Title of Representative  
Contact information (address, phone, email):

### **Section III. Need Statement (20 points)**

This section will identify the need for additional opportunities for transition age students in your community and how the Project SEARCH model would help meet that need.

- A) Project SEARCH must serve 8-12 interns per year in each site. Wisconsin Project SEARCH sites give priority to high school students with developmental disabilities, ages 18-21. Applications must focus on the capacity of the Partnership to fill a Project SEARCH program with high school students. As a result of the planning process, successful applicant partnerships may be allowed to enroll young adults with disabilities who have completed high school, ages 21-25.

Describe the current situation for transition age high school students with developmental disabilities (ages 18-21) in your community. You must include:

- 1) Current vocational exploration opportunities for students.
- 2) The average number of students who would be eligible for the program who exit school each year in the targeted geographic area.
- 3) Any opportunities to expand the applicant pool by partnering with multiple school districts.

- B) Describe why Project SEARCH would be a good match for your community. Project SEARCH must be developed as an additional program in the community and should not replace established transition services.



#### **Section IV. Community Capacity (40 points)**

This section will indicate the capacity of your community and proposed partnership to develop and sustain a Project SEARCH program.

- A) Describe the process that the lead agency will use to develop and maintain the partnerships required for a successful Project SEARCH program.
- 1) If you answered “No” for any of the partners listed above in the Partnership section (II), please briefly describe your plan for identifying the required partners and how you will bring them on to the team.
  - 2) Describe previous collaborative partnerships your agency has participated in to support students and individuals with disabilities in your community. Identify any relationships that are currently in place or have worked in the past with your partner agencies.
  - 3) Have you had a meeting with all of your anticipated partners where expectations for participation and roles/responsibilities for each partner were discussed? If yes, provide a brief summary of the meeting including the date of the meeting and who was present.
- B) Describe the capacity of the community to support Project SEARCH. Please include the following:
- 1) Describe the target community or expanded geographic area, including the counties, tribes, cities, and school districts and the population of the area.
  - 2) Describe the services your partner agencies currently provide in your target area.
  - 3) Describe the long term support services for your target area, including the MCOs or county based services. Is there a waiting list for long term support services in your target area? If so, how long is the average wait for services? How are people with disabilities supported in employment while they are on the waiting list?
  - 4) **Project SEARCH may be located in any type of large business that could offer an adequate number and variety of internship opportunities.** What businesses in your selected geographic area employ more than 200 people? What types of internship opportunities could these businesses provide for Project SEARCH interns? Describe any discussions you have had about Project SEARCH with a potential host business. It is not necessary to identify a host business, only to indicate whether or not there are suitable businesses in your community.

- 5) Describe collaborative efforts that you and your partner agencies have with any potential businesses.

#### **Section V. Qualifications of Personnel (10 points)**

Describe the capacity of the partner agency representatives to successfully plan and implement the Project SEARCH program. Include a brief biography of key personnel for the project as an appendix. The lead partner can be any of the required partners.

#### **Section VI. Letters of Support (10 points)**

This section will indicate the commitment of the confirmed and anticipated partners to the planning and implementation of the Project SEARCH model. List the letters of support that have been included from committed and potential partners. Letters must be attached to the application and will not be counted toward the 15 page limit.

Letters must indicate:

- A) The capacity of each agency and/or individuals to successfully partner in the planning and implementation of the Project SEARCH program.
- B) Each partner agency's relationship with and confidence in the lead agency to facilitate the process for the partnership. The lead agency may be any of the required partners.
- C) A statement confirming the partner agency's financial commitment to participating in the required training and technical assistance.

Additional letters of support may be included from other community entities or individuals.

#### **Section VII. Financial Commitment (20 points)**

This section will indicate the willingness and understanding of partner agencies to commit financially to the Project SEARCH model. Your financial commitment narrative should include anticipated expenses from each of the required partner agencies during the period of July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015. **These expenses will be incurred by the partner agencies and will not be reimbursed by the Department of Health Services.**

It is important to note that the team is expected to utilize the 2014-2015 year for planning purposes and implement the program in the 2015-2016 school year. This financial narrative should not include expenses associated with the implementation of the Project SEARCH site. Rather, it should reflect the expenses associated with participating in the required training, technical assistance and planning activities, as described in this RFA. (See: Purpose of the Initiative) Financial commitment must also be confirmed within the letters of support submitted by known partner agencies.

Additional financial commitment details may be attached in an Excel spreadsheet, which will not count toward the 15 page limit.

- A) Describe the number of personnel and percentage of their FTEs (full time employee positions) that will be dedicated to the project by the partner agencies. If a percentage of an existing full-time employee's time will be dedicated to the project, successful applicants will be required to show that partner agency employees' job descriptions have been changed to allow for the time devoted to Project SEARCH.
- B) Describe the financial commitment by partner agencies to fund participation in the training and technical assistance provided by this initiative, as detailed in this RFA. This must include estimated expenses related to travel, lodging, food and meeting locations for the required events.

**Scoring Summary:**

<u>Section:</u>	<u>Maximum points:</u>
Section I: Lead Agency Contact Information	5 points
Section II: Partnership	10 points
Section III: Need Statement	20 points
Section IV: Community Capacity	40 points
Section V: Qualifications of Personnel	10 points
Section VI. Letters of Support	10 points
Section VII. Financial Commitment	20 points
TOTAL available points	115 points